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A Crusade against the “Cowboy”?: Austrian Anti-Americanism during the Presidency of
George W. Bush, 2001-2009

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
In
History

By
Brandon Keene
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My knowledge of Austrian history derives very much from my time working with Dr. Peter Ruggenthaler and the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the Study of the Consequences of War in Graz. As a non-native German speaker, I have enlisted the help of several friends and colleagues in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland to translate portions of my primary sources for this work. Above all, it has been the constant support of my family to inspire me throughout my studies and research.

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Abstract

This essay examines anti-Americanism in Austria throughout George W. Bush's presidency, and Austrians' response to Bush's neoconservative team of advisers and his military actions in Iraq following the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington. For the first time in a century, a disposition of general hostility towards the United States came from both the Austrian Left and Right during the Bush years. Austrians' latent notions of negativity towards the United States grew inflamed over Bush's alienation of Western Europe and his determination to go to war against the Saddam regime in Iraq. Austrian anti-Americanism began to subside as Bush's power declined during his second term. Austrians' opinion of the United States sharply turned positive with the election of Barack Obama in 2008.

Keywords: Austria; History; George W. Bush; Anti-Americanism; Europe; United States

Introduction

Austria's national television network broadcasted forty-three hours of sympathetic news coverage of the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington. Less than six months later, Austrian news media sneered at President George W. Bush for honoring victims of the attacks as part of the opening ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City as crude and arrogant. Austrians found neither case too extreme. With more than a century of drastic swings between high and low public opinion of the United States behind them, Austrians were well adapted to such pivotal shifts between the two. The anti-Americanism that thrived in Austria throughout Bush's presidency was as high strung as the exhilaration that captured the small country when the young and liberal Barack Obama took the place of "the cowboy" in the White House in 2009.

Even when Austrians look favorably upon the United States, hostility towards the country is always within their reach. Much of Austrian identity lies in historical memory of the American presence in the country during the Marshall Plan years. While Austria has moved well beyond the phase of postwar recovery, there exists in Austrian culture an underlying resentment for dominant political power in other parts of the world, coupled with their realization that Austria never has regained the power position it had in the world before World War I. Austrians are prone to forming drastic opinions of the United States, and rather fast. There is a persistent awareness of the United States in Austria, and a peculiar fascination with the "American dream." Though Arnold Schwarzenegger immigrated to the United States in the 1960s, he is still constantly present in Austrian news as 'one of their own' who rose to the top in America.

By the end of the 20th century, Americans hardly reciprocated such interest. The 1980s conundrum over Austrian President Kurt Waldheim's alleged Nazi past did little to disturb the image of Austria as a quaint and peaceful tourist destination for the fraction of Americans who took notice at all of news related to the small Central European country. They viewed President Ronald Reagan's Justice Department's 1987 blacklisting of Waldheim from entering the United States as benign in the realm of foreign affairs, hardly noticing when or how the ordeal ended.¹ Foreign policy officials in Washington during the presidencies of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush paid little attention to Austria as well. Austrian historian Günter Bischof wrote in his study on Austrian-American relations in the 20th century that out of thousands of pages of memoirs from the two presidents and their key cabinet members, there were only three brief mentions of Austria.² A more positive attitude towards the United States in Austria has in recent decades correlated with American presidents showing interest in the country, as seen in the upswings of pro-Americanism during John Kerry's 2004 election campaign, and Barack Obama's in 2008.

A rite of passage for scholars on anti-Americanism is coining his or her own working definition of the term, adjusted to fit historical context and removing the ambiguity that popular use of the term has created. The vast majority of anti-Americanism is populist antagonism towards the United States that fluctuates parallel to contemporary fads of outspoken criticism of the country. Critics of the United States will often choose to be more outspoken with their condemnations when it suits the ideological interests of their peers and/or audience. In the case of Austria, anti-Americanism in the

¹ Günter Bischof, *Relationships/Beziehungsgeschichten: Austria and the United States and the Twentieth Century* (Vienna: StudienVerlag, 2014), 200-201.

² Bischof, *Relationships*, 172.

20th century was primarily a partisan trend, which became a nationwide trend during George W. Bush's presidency. Anti-American circles turn a blind eye to a great deal of prejudice, ignorance, and hypocrisy that frenzied critics tend to bring to the table.

George W. Bush's presidency was the first era during which Austrian anti-Americanism was strong across the political spectrum, rather than being exclusive to either the Right or Left.³ Preconceived Austrian notions of the United States as a greedy and barbaric empire rose quickly to the surface of Austrian discourse as a response to the Bush administration's neoconservative strides towards war as a response to the September 11, 2001 attacks. Bush's second term began with Austrian bitterness towards the American people over his 2004 reelection. But Austrian anti-Americanism began to subside after the Republicans were soundly defeated in the 2006 Congressional elections. The demise of neoconservative influence in Washington generated a simmering of anti-Americanism in Austria for the rest of the Bush presidency. Opinions of the United States swung high once again in Austria with the 2008 election of President Barack Obama. The first African-American president in U.S. history contributed to a revision of the face of the American presidency to Austrians, making America once again become 'their' empire in the west.

Historiography

Essential to this work is the exhaustive research on anti-Americanism as concept or idea that Max Paul Friedman published in *Rethinking anti-Americanism*. The author argued that the idea has historically been a cultural 'myth' that has defined alliance with and opposition to the United States in absolute terms. The concept developed from the

³ Bischof, *Relationships*, 25-57.

first Cold War, when, out of hypersensitivity to political ideologies that did not perfectly align with its own, the United States pioneered systems of tracking and managing opposition on a global scale. Whereas this witch hunt began with no definite criterion of anti-Americanism, the United States established a long-lasting trend of identifying all severities and exaggerations of criticism of the country as symptoms of an opposing ideology.

Parallel to this myth was American Exceptionalism, or the belief in some American superiority vis-a-vis the rest of the world. On this premise, many have gained legitimacy in condemning opposition to the United States as warped or even sacrilegious. One example that Friedman offered was the public lambasting of French president Charles de Gaulle for having warned United States officials against military intervention in Vietnam. Though de Gaulle aimed to divert America from disaster, United States officials distorted his cautionary criticism into being antagonistic, which derived from his personal distaste for the United States, and maybe even an indication of mental illness. Friedman argued that such hardline defiance of America's critics has contributed to many of the United States' policy failures.⁴

The phenomenon of widespread anti-Americanism during the second Bush presidency goes beyond Austria, and this work upholds Andrei Markovits' argument in *Uncouth Nation* that unilateral anti-Americanism had taken hold of Western Europe as a whole, and had become a part of European identity. Whereas Bush's unpopular actions after 9/11 brought on an unprecedented slump in European-American relations, anti-Americanism had become a common thread amongst Western European countries that

⁴ Max Paul Friedman, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2.

was likewise unprecedented. Western Europe saw the transformation of anti-Americanism being an unpopular and very much ‘outsider’ ideology that came to the core of the region’s cultural identity.⁵

Criticism of the United States from Americans themselves is often some of the most potent material for anti-Americanism abroad. Paul Hollander became the foremost author on this theme in *Anti-Americanism: Irrational and Rational*, in which he argued that “domestic criticism” of the United States is a “powerful factor in the growth and persistence of anti-Americanism abroad.” America’s critics abroad glean from domestic critics validation of their negative views of the United States.⁶ Hollander published this argument in the concept of European anti-Americanism in the 1990s. The argument became especially relevant when Austrian and pan-European anti-Americanism was at its height during the post-9/11 George W. Bush presidency.

Zooming in on Austria, Austrian historian Reinhold Wagnleitner’s contribution to this discussion comes in *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War*, his translated work on the United States’ cultural impact on Austria that became part of its post-Nazi blueprint for an anti-Communist Austrian society. The author outlined patterns between the imperial actions of America today and those of its European ancestors who had first arrived there with aims to explore and colonize. Likewise, the author drew parallels between America’s westward expansion on the grounds of Manifest Destiny and Spain’s religious conquest on the new world. Wagnleitner rejected traditional notions of *Americanization* as

⁵ Andrei Markovits, *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁶ Paul Hollander, “Western Europe,” in: idem, ed. *Anti-Americanism: Irrational and Rational* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 367-410, here 408-409.

a foreign threat to Europe, rather arguing that such was Europe's own historical expansionism returning from the new world to overtake traditional European society.

Wagnleitner also dealt with Austrian competition with the United States as a historical basis of Austrian anti-Americanism, tracing its historical roots to 1784, when Hapsburg emperor Joseph II noticed Western European trends of migration to the newly independent United States, and barred nearly all migration from Austria. He feared that migration might lead to brain drain from his empire. After the American Civil War, the United States was able to export foodstuffs to Western Europe at such a high rate that they encroached on Austria's own export markets. The United States was also exporting farming equipment that made agriculture much more efficient, and eventually changed the nature of European agriculture. While many nations sought trade partnership with America's industrialized and increasingly global economy, Vienna sat by mostly idle and lost out. The end of World War I and the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy left Vienna with the little territory that became Austria, while the United States emerged more powerful than ever as the premier leader in the world.⁷

This work is primarily a continuation of Günter Bischof's chapter in *Relationships/Beziehungsgeschichten*, "Two Sides of the Coin," in which he examined anti-Americanism in Austria from the 19th Century to the present as a trend that swings between the Left and Right sides of the Austrian political spectrum. Throughout the 20th century, Austrian anti-Americanism reacted to larger political trends and was isolated to one side of the Austrian political spectrum or the other. After Austria's annexation ("Anschluss") to the German Reich, the extreme far-right National Socialists resented the

⁷ Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, transl. by Diana M. Wolf (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

United States for its involvement in the treaty of Versailles and St. Germain after World War I, its support of and alliance with the British in opposing Nazi expansion, as well as the Anglo-American bombing of German cities during World War II.⁸ During the postwar years, Austrian conservatives on the Right lauded American economic models as a framework for Austria's long-term recovery. The Austrian Left meanwhile became anti-American in response to American "fascist" McCarthyism, and continued to protest American imperialism during the Vietnam War. The Austrian Right remained quiet on the Vietnam issue, perhaps out of residual gratitude for Marshall Plan recovery aid. Yet conservatives on the Right grew bitter towards the United States when President Ronald Reagan put President Kurt Waldheim "on the watchlist," preventing him from entering the United States.

Bischof's chapter ends with an introduction of George W. Bush's presidency as the first era during which anti-Americanism became strong on both sides of the political spectrum, namely on the Left and Right. Aggressive American neo-conservative "imperialism" and President Bush's new national security policy of "preemption" in the Near East, following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, awoke the long-standing anti-American tendencies among Austrians that were simmering beneath the surface level. This essay expands upon Bischof's introduction of the George W. Bush era to examine more closely trends of anti-Americanism in Austria, its causes, and evolution between the two four-year terms.⁹

⁸ "Austrian " history between 1938 and 1945 is a complex affair; the country had been wiped off the map by the Third Reich's annexation in March 1938 – during World War II Austria was incorporated as the "*Ostmark*" and then the "*Donau- und Alpengau*" into Nazi Germany and no longer existed as an independent state.

⁹ Bischof, *Relationships*, 25-57.

The empirical section of this work gleans primarily from Austrian news articles published during the George W. Bush presidency. Various schools of critical discourse analysis support the validity of these sources as representative of popular Austrian opinion.¹⁰ Austrian linguist Ruth Wodak's essay "History in the Making/The Making of History," analyzed the way that the composition of a 1995 historical exhibition on Austrian involvement in Nazi war crimes (the controversial *Wehrmachtsausstellung*) adhered to a certain socially constructed criteria of political correctness.¹¹ This work applies the same arguments to news commentary on contemporary events – journalists can only express ideologies that the public do not find too extreme. Adherence to such norms and standards of permissible "public discourse" is visible in Vienna publications such as the center-left newspaper *Der Standard*, the more conservative *Die Presse*, and the very popular and liberal weekly news magazine *Profil*, among other Austrian news sources.

Austrian Reactions to 9/11

European sympathy for the United States over the September 11, 2001 attacks was strong, yet brief. Public opinion in Austria was one of solidarity with the United States in the days following the attacks. America's Western Europeans allies and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) also gave their nod of approval to October 2001 U.S.-led military action against the Taliban's operations in Afghanistan, both out of residual sympathy and an earnest desire to see the responsible terror networks operating

¹⁰ Gavin Kendall "What Is Critical Discourse Analysis? Ruth Wodak in Conversation With Gavin Kendall," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 8, no. 2 (2007).

¹¹ Ruth Wodak, "History in the Making/The Making of History: The 'German *Wehrmacht*' in collective and individuals in Austria," *Journal of Language and Politics* 5, no. 1 (2006), 125-154.

out of Afghanistan dismantled. However, critics of the United States in Austrian media followed each action of the Bush administration with close scrutiny. Austrian and other Western European critics of the United States reacted harshly to the Bush administration's neoconservative campaign for preemptive military action in Iraq.¹²

A thorough review of the drastic swing in Austrian disposition towards the United States following the 9/11 attacks was Margit Reiter's essay "Signaturen des 11. September 2001 in Österreich" [Signatures of September 11 in Austria]. Reiter outlined how short-lived sympathy for the United States in Austria quickly transformed into a discussion of which long-term trends in American foreign policy and globalization had provoked the attacks. For example, Reiter quoted Wolf Martin in the *Kronen Zeitung* (Vienna), who, among several other critics in Austria, equated the World Trade Center towers to a modern-day Tower of Babel. The severe criticism towards America that surfaced some days after the attacks set a precedent for the similarly harsh discourses on the United States that would take place in Austrian media during the following years of Bush's presidency.¹³

The so-called "Bush Doctrine" of preemptive defense policy for Austrians became the handwriting on the wall that the Bush administration would exploit the 9/11 attacks to serve its neoconservative agenda.¹⁴ The core of Bush's cabinet members were a good-old-boys network of neoconservatives who had been unable to make any significant progress on launching a more hard core policy of projecting American power abroad

¹² Bush announced his new doctrine of military preemption in his graduation speech at Westpoint on June 1, 2002, see <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html> (accessed May 25, 2015).

¹³ Margit Reiter, "Signaturen des 11. September 2001 in Österreich," in Margit Reiter and Helga Embacher, eds., *Europa und der 11 September 2001* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2011), 161-192.

¹⁴ "President Delivers State of the Union Address," *The White House: George Bush*, 29 January 2002, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html> (accessed 01 May 2015).

prior to the 9/11 attacks. Figures like Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney had built reputations reaching as far back as the Vietnam era for their lack of interest in political bargaining, and priority given to the display of military power.¹⁵ Western Europeans and Austrians in particular became further disenchanted with the neoconservative Bush administration as they inched America closer to war in Iraq.

Austrian anti-Americanism leading up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq circled around Bush's determination to go to war to serve his own political agenda. There was also the suspicion that the President was serving the war-hungry inclinations of the American people, who had given the president higher approval ratings after his determined response on strengthening homeland security after the 9/11 attacks. Andreas Schwarz published an opinion piece in *Die Presse* on February 5, 2015 entitled "War Euphoria"; he argued that America gets caught up easily in the idea of being a protectorate of freedom, and that Bush needs to identify an enemy in order to get approval ratings.¹⁶ Susi Schneider, *Der Standard* correspondent in New York wrote on March 22, 2002 that Bush had "not seen a single political victory that was not directly linked to the fight against terror."¹⁷

Some of the more extreme Austrian critics of the United States looked beyond the neoconservative agenda to make more pronounced arguments about American imperialism. Peter Pilz, Austrian Green Party spokesman, became a leading voice of such

¹⁵ James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

¹⁶ Andreas Schwarz, "Kriegs-Euphorie," *Die Presse* (Vienna), 05 February 2015, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/meinungarchiv/273499/KriegsEuphorie?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 05 May 2015).

¹⁷ Susi Schneider, "Wenig Erfolg an der Heimatfront," *Der Standard* (Vienna), 22 March 2002, <http://derstandard.at/904467/Wenig-Erfolg-an-der-Heimatfront> (accessed 02 May 2015).

criticism. In his 2003 book *Mit Gott Gegen Alle* [With God Against All] he argued strongly that Bush was leading America on a path towards world domination. According to Pilz, Bush had been waiting for an excuse to wage war against Iraq as a step towards hegemony in the near east and beyond, and the 9/11 attacks gave him this opportunity.¹⁸

Austrian critics developed a keen eye for evidence to maintain the popular image of Bush as a poster child for war-obsessed and hyper-patriotic America. *Die Presse* journalist Dietmar Neuwirth sneered at “The Texan” for having taken the liberty of turning the opening ceremonies of the February 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City into a crude display of arrogance and patriotism. According to Neuwirth, the honoring of 9/11 victims as part of the ceremony “for the umpteenth time, anyway?” was as self-serving to Bush’s America as the lighting of the Olympic cauldron by the 1980 USA Men’s Hockey team.¹⁹ Drawing a line between the ceremonies and Bush’s worth as a leader, Neuwirth argued: “True greatness is different.”²⁰

Austria’s political leadership had also been unpopular in the international arena at the time. Following the 1999 parliamentary elections, the far-right and notoriously xenophobic Austria Freedom Party (FPÖ) took a dominant role in the national government by entering into the so-called *Schwarz-Blaue* governing coalition with the center-right Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP). The unprecedented level of power that the extremist FPÖ now had in Austria disturbed the international community. Fourteen EU member states reduced diplomatic contacts with Austria over the ordeal. The Clinton

¹⁸ Peter Pilz, *Mit Gott Gegen Alle: Amerikas Kampf um die Weltherrschaft* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2003). 2.

¹⁹ The USA Men’s Hockey team in the 1980 winter games at Lake Placid had become a symbol of American nationalism by winning a gold medal over the Soviet Union in the midst of the Cold War.

²⁰ Dietmar Neuwirth, “George W. Bush – ein kleiner Chauvinist,” *Die Presse*, 11 February 2002, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/meinungarchiv/273073/George-W-Bush-ein-kleiner-Chauvinist?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 05 May 2015).

Administration temporarily withdrew the United States' ambassador in Vienna while the events unfolded, although they eventually resumed normal diplomatic relations.²¹

Allegedly anti-Semitic FPÖ leader Jörg Haider stepped away from the new coalition in an attempt to reduce its extremist image, yet remained a controversial figure in Austrian politics. In February 2002, Haider poured oil into the fire by travelling independently to Baghdad for a highly publicized "state visit" with Saddam Hussein. Returning with outspoken claims of a new level of solidarity with Iraq, Haider drew international publicity for using the visit to "urge Europe to distance itself from the United States."²² The Austrian government had not sanctioned Haider's visit, and the former FPÖ leader came under fire for his self-serving actions misrepresenting the Austrian people. *Der Standard* columnist Hans Rauscher lamented in a February 14, 2002 article that Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel's administration would now have Haider's actions damaging relations with Washington.²³

When the United States led its March 2003 invasion of Iraq, Austria was one of several Western European countries that refused to join the "coalition of the willing" and contribute military forces to the campaign. In December 2002, the Austrian parliament debated about having reluctantly allowed American use of Austrian airspace during the attacks on Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 after the 9/11 attacks. During the Iraq war, Austria completely closed its airspace to US military overflights.²⁴ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had further alienated the so-called "coalition of the unwilling" in

²¹ Bischof, *Relationships*, 181-185, 197-215.

²² "Far-right Lauds Haider's Baghdad," *BBC News*, 13 February 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1817993.stm> (accessed 15 May 2015).

²³ Hans Rauscher, "Es geht um Schüssels Autorität," *Der Standard*, 14 February 2002, <http://derstandard.at/865685/Es-geht-um-Schuessels-Autoritaet> (accessed 02 May 2015).

²⁴ Hartwig Hummel, "A Survey of Involvement of 15 European States in the Iraq War 2003 (revised version)," Parliamentary Control of Security Policy, working paper 7, 2007, 7, http://paks.uni-duesseldorf.de/Dokumente/paks_working_paper_7_rev.pdf (accessed 28 May 2015).

Europe in January 2003. In open dialogue at the United States Foreign Press Center, Rumsfeld expressed the United States' foreign policy interests to have shifted towards the Eastern European NATO member states that supported United States aims in invading Iraq. As to the Western European states who opposed the war, Rumsfeld shrugged them off as the "Old Europe."²⁵

The negative reaction from Austrians also came as a response to neoconservative harping about a lack of European support for the common Western defense. They also saw Americans' resentment of Secretary of Defense Ronald Rumsfeld and his offensive rhetoric. *Der Standard* correspondent Susi Schneider published an editorial on January 24, 2003 that criticized Rumsfeld for misrepresenting the American people.²⁶ Rumsfeld's talk of "old Europe" not supporting American actions against terrorism came with the almost concurrent critique of the neoconservative think tank figure Robert Kagan chiding the U.S.'s European allies of not doing enough for the common Western defense, noting that Americans were "from Mars" while Western Europeans were "from Venus."²⁷

2003 Iraq invasion

Austrians kept their backs turned toward Bush for the remainder of his presidency, after his March 2003 invasion of Iraq came without the consent of the UN Security Council. Cynical speculation over the Bush administration's intentions in Iraq boiled over quickly to becoming an extreme backlash and protest against Washington's

²⁵ "Secretary Rumsfeld Briefs at the Foreign Press Center," U.S. Department of Defense, 22 January 2003, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1330> (accessed 28 May 2015).

²⁶ Susi Schneider, "Donald Rumsfeld, US-Verteidigungsminister und Kritiker des "alten" Europa," *Der Standard*, 24 January 2003, <http://derstandard.at/1192979/Donald-Rumsfeld-US-Verteidigungsminister-und-Kritiker-des-alten-Europa> (accessed 25 April 2015).

²⁷ Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

aggression. Anti-Americanism in Austria peaked in the wake of the invasion of Iraq, and would stay relatively unchanged throughout the remainder of Bush's first term. Austrian predispositions towards the United States as a greedy and imperialist power rose to the surface in reactions to the invasion.

Widespread opposition to America's war in Iraq centered on Bush's skewed motives in the war. After the months-long ordeal of appeals to the United Nations Security Council, Washington's questionable evidence about weapons of mass destruction in Saddam Hussein's hands, as well as the charge that the Iraqi dictator harbored Al Qaida terrorists in his country, Austrian public opinion boiled over. A 2003 *Gallup* poll showed that 85% of Austrians found participation in the Iraq invasion without a mandate from the UN to be "unjustified."²⁸ In the evenings leading up to February 2003 protests against the war in Vienna, a gigantic image of Bush's face shone on the city's venerable old Burgtheater, across from Vienna's city hall. Greenpeace, who had funded many of the worldwide protests against Bush and the war, sponsored the projection the president's face on the theater in order to rally participation in the protest. Along with the president's face was the message: "No war for oil! Stop Exxon, Stop Bush!"²⁹

After the American invasion of Iraq began, charges of American greed and barbarism littered Austrian news on the war. On March 17, 2003, Gerhard Maurer wrote in the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* (Linz) about the United States having historically acted under a pretext of being commissioned by God to set things right in the world. Yet all the US had really accomplished was to dissolve old alliances, put new dictators into

²⁸ Hummel, "A Survey of Involvement," 8.

²⁹ "Bush am Burgtheater," *Der Standard*, 14 February 2003, <http://derstandard.at/1210914> (accessed 26 February 2015).

power, and cause societies crashing into disorder.³⁰ Maurer contradicted himself in a column some weeks after the attacks began. Now he labeled Bush's attacks as driven by money, rather than by some mission from God. He noted that oil companies had donated largely to Bush's campaign; a funding model, which Maurer said, "deserves a Nobel prize in economics."³¹ Even the liberal *Der Standard* saw economic motives as having fueled Bush's aggression in an editorial on March 28, 2003. It revealed that Bush had awarded contracts for the reconstruction of the Iraqi port Umm Qasr to Haliburton (the Texas oil field giant, over which Vice President Cheney had been CEO prior to joining the Bush team), even before US forces had even conquered the port. The editorial also noted that the Congress-approved budget of an additional 75 billion USD for the war was higher than the expenditures of Austria's total annual budget.³²

The image of the Bush administration as war-mongering "cowboys" solidified in the months following the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. Critics in Austria sneered at the United States for having moved into an era of boundless imperialism that had the support of most American people. *Der Standard* correspondent Susi Schneider cited a number of polls that showed over half of Americans in favor of a war in Iraq, and roughly the same approving of Bush in general.³³ University of Graz professor Bernd Schilcher called it "the New USA Cannibalism" in an April 2003 article in *Die Presse*. Citing a post-9/11 daze in America, and a level of jingoistic patriotism that the rest of the world never fully

³⁰ Gerhard Maurer, "Visionen und Wirklichkeit," *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* (Linz), 17 March 2003, http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20030316_OTS0043/oenachrichten-17-maerz-2003-visionen-und-wirklichkeit-von-gerhard-maurer (accessed 26 February 2015).

³¹ Gerhard Maurer, "Gott und Geld," *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 04 April 2003, at <http://www.reniten.at/aktuelles/archiv.htm> (accessed 26 February 2015).

³² Erhard Stackl, "Krieg und Geschäft - Von Erhard Stackl," *Der Standard*, 28 March 2003, <http://derstandard.at/1251625/Krieg-und-Geschaef---Von-Erhard-Stackl> (accessed 02 May 2015).

³³ Susi Schneider, "USA: Mehr als die Hälfte für Irakkrieg auch ohne UNO" *Der Standard*, 12 March 2003, <http://derstandard.at/1235923/USA-Mehr-als-die-Haelfte-fuer-Irakkrieg-auch-ohne-UNO> (accessed 02 May 2015).

understood, Schilcher's article antagonized the majority of American voters and congressmen who stood behind the "crazed Texas cowboys" in the White House.³⁴ Austrian anti-Americanism during this phase of Bush's presidency was losing its rational grounding.

The language that many Austrian critics used in their discourse on the situation in America often was extreme. It reflected a deliberate interest in expressing ill will towards the United States that went beyond being a negative reaction to current events. General director of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (*ORF*) Gerd Bacher's criticism of the "crusaders" in the Bush administration, published in *Die Presse* on April 19, 2003 contained such dramatic language. Bacher summarized America's actions in Iraq as: "We, the neocon junta to which Bush adheres, strive to be the dominant power in the Middle East." Bacher, a staunch conservative and not known to be an expert on the United States, extrapolated the Iraq war to be an extreme case of American imperialism, to say that "The Middle East is a prerequisite of the Pax Americana, especially in light of the Far East."³⁵ Anti-Americanism in Austria during Bush's first term made this sort of outspokenly negative critique of the United States acceptable in Austrian mainstream discourse. More extreme cases existed as well, such as the aforementioned article from Bernd Schilcher, in which he used "Kill Bush" posters in Leipzig as a mere anecdote of European opposition to the United States.³⁶

³⁴ Bernd Schilcher, "Der Neue USA-Kannibalismus," *Die Presse*, 08 April 2003, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/gastkommentar/212868/Der-neue-USA-Kannibalismus?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 17 May 2015).

³⁵ Gerd Bacher, "Die Abenteuerlust der Kreuzfahrer," *Die Presse*, 19 April 2003, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/gastkommentar/213182/Die-Abenteuerlust-der-Kreuzfahrer?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 05 May 2015).

³⁶ Schilcher, "USA-Kannibalismus."

The spread of anti-Americanism across the Austrian political spectrum was evident, although there were still conflicting views on the Iraq war between the Left and Right. *Der Standard* columnist Hans Rauscher published an article shortly after the invasion of Iraq to illuminate the trend. Part of his argument was quotations from the louder voices of anti-Americanism on the Left and the Right, namely Green Party spokesman Peter Pilz and FPÖ leader Jörg Haider. Rauscher brought historical anti-Americanism into the discussion, by also comparing contemporary Austrian anti-Americanism with the 1939 condemnation of American imperialism by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels.³⁷ Pilz rejected Rauscher's comparison in a *Standard* op-ed the following day, rejecting the idea that he shared either in the ideologies of National Socialism or Haider's offensive xenophobic Freedom Party.³⁸ The champions of anti-Americanism and those who wanted to stay fair about America's projection of power in the world were flailing at each other.

While Austrian anti-Americanism during the George W. Bush years became mainstream, a series of anti-American books from Austrian authors helped define the trend. Pilz's aforementioned *With God Against All* received a fair deal of attention as a sneering interpretation of United States foreign policy and a poorly-masked attempt for political and economic hegemony in the world.³⁹ Other blatantly anti-American titles include Wilhelm Lagenthaler's 2003 *Ami Go Home: Zwölf Gute Gründe für*

³⁷ Hans Rauscher, "Links, rechts, und gegen die USA," *Der Standard*, 27 March 2013, <http://derstandard.at/1254514> (accessed 20 February 2015).

³⁸ Peter Pilz, "Europas Doppelter Boden," *Der Standard*, 28 March 2015, <http://derstandard.at/1255400/Europas-doppelter-Boden> (accessed 13 May 2015).

³⁹ Pilz, *Mit Gott Gegen Alle*.

Antiamerikanismus [Yankee Go Home: Twelve Good Reasons for anti-Americanism], and Eric Frey's 2004 *Schwarzbuch USA* [Black Book USA].⁴⁰

In the context of popular Austrian dislike of America in 2004, Frey's *Schwarzbuch USA* served as a cornerstone of anti-American literature with its concise "list of sins" of the United States, ranging from the colonial era to the present. Margit Reiter also labeled it as such. Yet Frey's intent in writing the *Schwarzbuch* must not be overlooked in the context of anti-Americanism. Frey wrote in the introduction of his book that he intended to publish his list of sins as constructive criticism of a country that he loved. As a popular Austrian journalist and academic, much of his education and career has revolved around the United States. He is a graduate of Princeton University, taught for a year at the University of New Orleans as Marshall Plan Chair, and frequently publishes sympathetically on topics involving the United States.⁴¹ Yet the book contained many criticisms of the United States that supported the popular anti-American discourse of the era in Austria.

The worst anti-American instincts of Western Europeans were confirmed, when American abuses and humiliations of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib came to light months after the invasion of the country. The CIA and US military tortured Iraqi prisoners with so-called "enhanced interrogations." The news shocked human rights organizations and fired up critics of the Bush administration and its disastrous policies in Iraq.⁴² In reaction to the release of internal memos from the Pentagon and the White House in which Bush

⁴⁰ Reiter, "Signaturen," 187; Wilhelm Lagenthaler, *Ami Go Home: Zwölf Gute Gründe für einen Antiamerikanismus* (Vienna: Promedia, 2003); Eric Frey, *Schwarzbuch USA* (Frankfurt: Eichborn, 2004).

⁴¹ Charles P. Kirchofer, "Eric Frey's Schwarzbuch USA: Journalistic Criticism or Liberal Anti-Americanism? A Case Study on the Border of Anti-Americanism," 2009 essay analysis of the book for a course at Webster University, <http://www.english4you.biz/papers/aApaper.pdf> (accessed 28 May 2015).

⁴² See, for example, the extensive report of investigative journalist Seymour M. Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib, *The New Yorker*, May 10, 1984, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/05/10/torture-at-abu-ghraib> (accessed May 25, 2015).

and his administration had staged plausible deniability for the abuses, *Profil* labeled the attempt to create ambiguity as “Bush-style Exoneration.” The weekly news magazine called the scandal an expansion of the president’s “political crisis.”⁴³

Months into the Iraq war, Bush turned his cold shoulder on what Rumsfeld called “old Europe”, whenever he got a chance. During a celebration for the 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg in June 2003, Bush sat at a table with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Bush did not offer a seat to German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, and declined an interview with the Chancellor some days later at the G8 summit meeting in France. During the G8 meeting in Evian, Bush offered the host French President Jacques Chirac only a quick smile.⁴⁴ Bush sacrificed America’s image in Western Europe to his larger neoconservative agenda in the Near East for the remainder of his first term.

Bush’s Reelection and Second Term

Austrians were forced to reevaluate Bush and the American public in November 2004 when President Bush won the election for a second term. Allegations of voter fraud and Bush’s defiance of Congress in his first term had tarnished the President’s legitimacy as America’s representative leader. Yet an unquestioned reelection, after the 2000 election scandals, removed the benefit of the doubt that foreign critics might have had about the American electorate, hoping that perhaps Bush and America were two different ideas. Though public disapproval of Bush remained roughly the same between the two

⁴³ “Abu-Ghraib Skandal: Klima der Zweideutigkeit,” *Profil* (Vienna), 26 June 2004, <http://www.profil.at/home/abu-ghraib-skandal-klima-zweideutigkeit-85382> (accessed 28 May 2015).

⁴⁴ Wieland Schneider, “Am Katzentisch der Weltpolitik,” *Die Presse*, 02 June 2003, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/meinungarchiv/234718/Am-Katzentisch-der-Weltpolitik?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 05 May 2015).

terms, Bush had made efforts in his second term to mend relationships with the leaders of the “old Europe”.

Optimism for Bush losing a reelection bid in 2004 and leaving office after only one term led to a sort of short-lived renaissance in Austrian opinion of the United States. Austrians turned their attention toward the November 2004 presidential election very early on. The liberal weekly news magazine *Profil* remarked in October 2003 that Bush’s supposed monopoly on Americans had ended and that Democrats in the United States were gaining momentum in their run on the White House.⁴⁵ Support for Bush’s opponent Democratic candidate John Kerry was high in Austria. On the eve of the 2004 elections, polls showed 73% of Austrians favored John Kerry, and only 7% supported Bush (the rest were undecided).⁴⁶ Kerry won the hearts of Austrians in part because of the attention he gave to Austria. For example, in a 2003 interview with *Profil*, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee assured Austrians that he shared their resentments and criticisms of Bush and his Near Eastern policies. It also helped Kerry to distance himself from the uncouth Texas “cowboy,” revealing that his wife spoke five languages.⁴⁷ A later *Profil* article on a July 2004 meeting of Democrats Abroad in Vienna reflected a great deal of hype over the election, lauding the support for Kerry that his sister had rallied in visits around Europe, including one to Austria a few months before.⁴⁸

Austrian anticipation for Kerry’s (hoped for) election and removal of the Republican “regime” from Washington led to brief moments of subsiding Austrian anti-

⁴⁵ “USA: Das andere Amerika,” *Profil*, 25 October 2003, <http://www.profil.at/home/usa-das-amerika-67660> (accessed 01 April 2015).

⁴⁶ “Österreicher zu 73 Prozent für Kerry,” *Der Standard*, November 2 2004, <http://derstandard.at/1841855> (accessed 26 February 2015).

⁴⁷ “John Kerry: Ein freundliches Gesicht Amerikas,” *Profil*, 30 August 2003, <http://www.profil.at/home/john-kerry-ein-gesicht-amerikas-63671> (accessed 28 March 2015).

⁴⁸ “Die Kampf um die verlorene Ehre,” *Profil*, 31 July 2004, <http://www.profil.at/home/der-kampf-ehre-88535> (accessed 5 April 2015).

Americanism – the United States even found some praise from Austrians. A May 2004 *Profil* article applauded the progress of the American Left with headway being made towards equal rights for gays. *Profil* noticed that their very own Austrian-born California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger had recently ended his opposition to gay marriage. As the topic of gay marriage had hardly entered the Austrian political arena at that time, the article claimed that Austria needed to “catch up” with American progress on this issue.⁴⁹

Election fraud scandals surrounding Bush’s win in the 2000 presidential election had Austrian critics of Bush closely watching for misconduct at the November 2004 polls. The Vienna-based Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe sent over 80 officials to key American states to oversee the election for signs of misconduct. Some of these observers were quoted in *Die Presse* on November 4 complaining of an “arrogant” lack of cooperation from some US election officials, yet asserted confidence in valid election results.⁵⁰ Bush’s successful and legitimate reelection campaign in 2004 confirmed to Austrians that the American people not only sanctioned their president’s actions post-9/11, but enough so that they would opt for another four years of the same policies. Though Austrians were momentarily overcome with shock over Bush’s electoral victory, there was a new acceptance in Austria of Bush as America’s legitimately chosen leader. Eric Frey published an editorial in *Der Standard* following Bush’s reelection, saying “America and its president belong together – whether the world likes it or not.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ “Die Regenbogen-Revolution,” *Profil*, 27 May 2004, <http://www.profil.at/home/die-regenbogen-revolution-82816> (accessed 04 April 2015).

⁵⁰ Wieland Schneider, “Wahlbeobachtung: ‘Bisher sehen wir keine Probleme’” *Die Presse*, 4 November 2004, http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/158227/Wahlbeobachtung_Bisher-sehen-wir-keine-Probleme?from=suche.intern.portal (accessed 03 March 2015).

⁵¹ Eric Frey, “Willkommen im Bushland,” *Der Standard*, November 3 2004, <http://derstandard.at/1845431> (accessed 26 February 2015).

In Bush's first press conference after reelection, he announced his intention to reach out to skeptics around the world – namely those in Europe – to better justify to them his action in Iraq.⁵² Even prior to his reelection, Bush had embarked on a diplomatic scavenger hunt to ease relations with the “old Europe,” making visits to Rome, Paris, and Brussels, which showed positive results.⁵³ Bush's rare trip to Vienna in June 2006 for the US-EU Summit was a defining moment for Austrian-American relations. He became the first US president to visit Austria since Jimmy Carter's summit with Brezhnev in 1979, 27 years before him.⁵⁴ The President's 2006 visit compared favorably with the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Austrian State Treaty in 2005, when Bush sent a message of disinterest to the Austrian government by sending a retired senator from Minnesota to attend the anniversary event, so important to Austrian postwar identity. This time, Bush traveled with the First Lady and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.⁵⁵

Bush's symbolic visit in June 2006 hardly left an imprint on Austrian public opinion of the president. Jörg Haider asserted in an interview with *Die Presse*, in which he called Bush a “war criminal,” that the President's visit was only good for appearances -- the American President had no genuine interest in improving relations with Europe. Furthermore, Haider insisted that it would better if the summit just did not take place at all, since it would only cost Austrians money and produce traffic congestion in Vienna.⁵⁶

⁵² For a transcript of the press conference, see “Transcript of President Bush's News Conference” *New York Times*, 4 November 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/04/politics/04BUSHTRANS.html?pagewanted=1&_r=0 (accessed 04 March 2015).

⁵³ Bischof, *Relationships*, 190.

⁵⁴ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, “Bush's Visit to Vienna Is Marked by Tension,” *New York Times*, 21 June 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/21/world/europe/21cnd-prexy.html?_r=0 (accessed 26 April 2015).

⁵⁵ Bischof, *Relationships*, 190.

⁵⁶ Christian Ultsch “Haider: Natürlich ist Bush ein Kriegsverbrecher,” *Die Presse*, 17 June 2006, http://diepresse.com/home/politik/eu/59294/Haider_Natürlich-ist-Bush-ein-Kriegsverbrecher?from=suche.intern.portal (accessed 05 May 2015).

Austrian Communist newspaper *Der Funke* (Vienna) published similar gripes after the president's visit, complaining that it had led to the inner city being closed off for five hours to allow Laura Bush to visit the city's main tourist attractions.⁵⁷ Security concerns were certainly relevant during Bush's visit, as protests in Vienna against the president's arrival were comparable to those on the eve of the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. A poll taken just before the summit showed that 72 percent of Austrians deemed Bush "unlikable."⁵⁸

While low public opinion of Bush in Austria remained unchanged, his 2006 visit sparked a new type of discussion of the president. A showcase of this is a June 2006 cover feature on Bush in *Profil*, entitled "The Crazy Life of George Bush: What Makes the Most Powerful Man in the World Tick." Going beyond the usual popular notions of Bush's incompetence, the article remarked on the president's well-developed political talent for being the president that Americans wanted. He was charming and witty, enough so to get hearty laughs from his self-deprecating cracks on past controversies such as voter fraud; at least, he presented himself as a man of faith. The feature humanized many of the president's flaws, examining his deep fears of failing to satisfy his family's historic level of public success as the source of a "severe personality disorder," and the demon behind Bush's years of struggle with substance abuse. As a natural businessman, Bush's

⁵⁷ "Bush Visit to Vienna provokes mass protest against imperialism and war," *Der Funke*, 23 June 2006, published by *Marxist.com*, <http://www.marxist.com/bush-vienna-mass-protest-imperialism-war230606.htm> (accessed 05 April 2015).

⁵⁸ "George W. Bush in Österreich," *ÖRF*, 20 June 2006, <http://tirv1.orf.at/stories/117037> (accessed 27 April 2015).

overt confidence in his actions recruited identical faith in his leadership – the kind of non-hesitating bullheadedness that American neoconservatives craved.⁵⁹



Figure 3: Vienna News Magazine *Profil*'s 17 June 2006 issue featuring George W. Bush. Cover story translated: "The Crazy World of George Bush: From drinker to U.S. President: How does the ruler of the last superpower tick? How fanatic is he really? And how do the Austrians view him?"⁶⁰

Gradual decline of Bush's presidential power throughout his second term likewise reduced his ability to feed Austrians material that they could react negatively against. The midterm elections of November 2006 put Democrats in control over Congress, making American policy overall more tolerable to Austrian critics. Günter Bischof looked back on Bush's second term in an August 2008 interview with *Salzburger Nachrichten*,

⁵⁹ Sebastian Heinzel and Robert Misik, "Die verrückte Welt des George W. Bush: Wie tickt der mächtigste Mann der Welt wirklich?," *Profil*, 17 June 2006, <http://www.profil.at/home/die-welt-george-w-bush-wie-mann-welt-143389> (accessed 01 April 2015).

⁶⁰ "Die profil-Covers 2006 (7.1.20016), Bild 33 von 66," Cover story title translated: "The Crazy World of George W. Bush: From drinker to US President: What makes the ruler of the last superpower tick? How zealous is he really? And how do Austrians view him?," *Profil*, <http://www.profil.at/covergalerie/profil-covers-2006-5406862/5406823> (accessed 06 April 2015).

observing that the president's decrease in power since the 2006 midterm elections had made him the longest-sitting lame duck president in American history⁶¹

Michael Moore

Filmmaker Michael Moore and his run of left-field slander against Bush and right-wing America were a textbook example of material critiquing America from within the United States; Austrians learned from Moore for their own anti-Americanism. As Paul Hollander argued in his essay collection *Anti-Americanism*, criticism of the United States like Moore's from within the country tends to be the most welcome for critics abroad to consume and regurgitate in their own cases against America. Throughout the Bush era, Austria was a very lucrative market for Moore's anti-American propaganda.

Moore's white-apologist and anti-Clinton and anti-Bush book *Stupid White Men* (2001) was a number one bestseller in the United States for eight weeks, yet sales in the United States within the first two years were less than 60 percent of the number of German translations sold worldwide, according to German news broadcaster *Deutsche Welle*. Moore's controversial 2004 documentary film *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which elaborated on Bush's shady reactions to the 9/11 attacks, and his financial interests in the Iraq war broke viewership records for Austrian public television station *ORF* when it broadcasted the film. *ORF* had been the same network to broadcast 43 hours of continuous coverage on the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001.⁶²

⁶¹ Günter Bischof, "Die Neue Welt Nach Amerika," *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 23 August 2008.

⁶² Reiter, "Signaturen," 165.

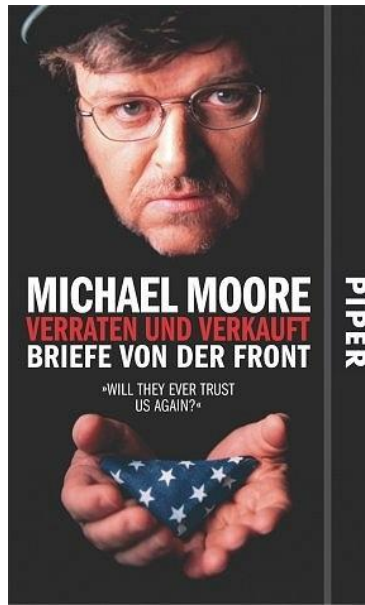


Figure 4: German Translation of Michael Moore's 2004 Book *Will They Ever Trust Us Again?*

Moore reached Austrian audiences during George W. Bush's presidency by cultivating a preexisting negativity towards the United States that a portion of his American audiences also harbored. Such was one of the "Fundamental Principles of all Propaganda" that Renaud de la Brosse of the University of Reims outlined in his 2003 report on former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosvevic's media propaganda campaign for the ousted leader's trial for war crimes. Brosse emphasized the need for a "fertile ground" of existing ideology in order for propaganda in its favor to be successful.⁶³ A review of *Fahrenheit 9/11* in the center-right *Presse* hailed the film as an unbiased confirmation of Europeans' prejudices that "Americans [were] stupid."⁶⁴ Moore was not

⁶³ Renaud de la Brause, "Political Propaganda and the Plan to Create a 'State for all Serbs': Consequences of Using the Media for Ultra-Nationalist Ends," 2003, report to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, .pdf scans of the report available on the official website of the documentary film *Srebrenica: staden som offrades*, http://www.stadensomoffrades.se/de_la_brosse_political_propaganda_pt5.pdf (all accessed 19 May 2015).

⁶⁴ Eva Male, "TV-Kritik: Weniger wäre Moore: Die USA, Plakativ," *Die Presse*, 3 November 2004, http://diepresse.com/home/kultur/medien/192503/TvKritik_Weniger-waere-Moore_Die-USA-plakativ?from=suche.intern.portal (accessed 06 April 2015).

doing this by mistake, either. For example, he delivered a lecture in Munich in which he fed his laughing audience material on the stupidity of the average American.⁶⁵ Moore's extreme criticisms of the Bush administration and the United States did not deliver any new ideology of anti-Americanism to Austrians – they simply made him their cheerleader.

Moore's criticisms gave Europeans a green light to freely spout their Anti-American slander, as Andrei Markowitz argued. Whatever denigration against the United States they regurgitated from Moore's work was not bigotry if they had first heard it from a genuine American. Moreover, the director's self-projected image of a bleeding heart patriot shielded his work from allegations of being anti-American. This was echoed in a *Spiegel* review of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, claiming Moore was "Our Man in America."⁶⁶ During the Bush era Austrians had a tendency to celebrate other figures in American pop culture that reaffirmed their negative views of the country. *Profil* celebrated the rise of American pop stars against their president in the "Vote For Change Tour" of 2004, during which artists like Moby and Bruce Springsteen had traveled to swing states to perform in support of Kerry.⁶⁷

Austrian Introspection on its Anti-Americanism

While Austrian anti-Americanism was a vibrant trend through most of George W. Bush's presidency, a number of Austrian critics during the era called into question the hypocritical and uninformed opinions of the United States from within their country. Even while Austrian anti-Americanism was at its height during Bush's first term,

⁶⁵ Markowitz, *Uncouth Nation*, 14-16.

⁶⁶ Richard Schuberth, "Michael Moore – unser Mann in Amerika," *Der Standard*, 10 September 2004, <http://derstandard.at/1789832/Michael-Moore--unser-Mann-in-Amerika> (accessed 06 April 2015).

⁶⁷ "Protestlauf," *Profil*, 7 August 2004, <http://www.profil.at/home/protestlauf-89147> (accessed 05 April 2015).

members of the Austrian media made periodic criticisms of the absolutist opposition to the United States that the paradigm supported.

In a series of articles between September and October 2002, *Die Presse*'s Andreas Schwarz approached the Austrian debate over Bush's moves toward a war in Iraq with observant neutrality. Schwarz coolly examined the Bush administration's determination for "a military strike [against Iraq] at any cost" without evidence that Saddam was any more dangerous than he had been five years prior. He challenged America's critics, however, who overlooked the fact that Saddam was a known war criminal who had shrugged off a decade of the United Nations' attempts to negotiate with his regime towards an end to his actions. As for the "horrificed anti-Americanism" in Austria and slander against the "cowboys in the White House," Schwarz called it "a bit cheap," but probably somewhat justified.⁶⁸

One of the more ardent critics of Austrian anti-Americanism from within was Burkhard Bischof, Deputy Editor of Foreign Affairs for *Die Presse* and younger brother of Günter Bischof. Burkhard took notice of Austrians' tendency to sneer at America for its stature in the world in comparison with their own. In response to the drastic swing from sympathy to anti-Americanism in Austria after the 9/11 attacks, he argued that the extreme love and hate for America throughout the world derives from a "disturbed relationship to power. (...) power one might admire for not possessing; or power, one might be disgusted with as a result of feeling powerless." He also chimed in on an early 2002 discussion of American development of nuclear weapons that had Austrians

⁶⁸ Andreas Schwarz, "Verkerte Welt," 07 October 2002, *Die Presse*, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/meinungarchiv/273442/Verkehrte-Welt?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 05 May 2015); Andreas Schwarz, "Nur ein Alibi?" *Die Presse*, 17 September 2002, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/meinungarchiv/273351/Nur-ein-Alibi?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 05 May 2015).

rallying against the United States, saying that it had been no secret that the United States had been doing so for decades. In a frenzy of anti-Americanism, Austrians were gleaming whatever material they could for slander against the United States. As Bischof wrote, “Everything the USA currently thinks, plans to do, or refrains from doing, can be used against them. And it is (...) anti-Americanism in high season.”⁶⁹

Burkhard Bischof nailed the laundry list of essential elements of traditional anti-Americanism. As he wrote, “What usually happens that after ‘insights’ expressed in such well-known rants against Hollywood, Microsoft, and McDonalds, they [the America-haters] repeat the usual list of American sins – from the genocide of the Indians to Hiroshima, from their manic obsession with guns to their exaggerated jingoism, from their destruction of the environment to their pursuit of political and cultural hegemony in the world.”⁷⁰ A May 2007 article in *Die Presse* labeled America as an “Imperial Republic,” but also noted that even in countries where the public “officially despises” the American way of life, they “secretly admire” it.⁷¹

Following Bush’s 2004 reelection that affirmed Americans’ support of their president, the general narrow-mindedness and hypocrisy of the average Austrian who slammed the Americans over Bush’s reelection came into question. A November 2004 *Profil* article slated the average Austrian for barely looking beyond popular cynical media to arrive at conclusions, like “The *Amis* must be pretty stupid if they elect a guy like George W. Bush president. After all, he lied to them about Saddam Hussein, he pulled

⁶⁹ Burkhard Bischof, “Viel Lärm um nichts,” *Die Presse*, 13 March 2002, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/meinungarchiv/273391/Viel-Laerm-um-nichts?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 02 May 2015).

⁷⁰ Burkhard Bischof, “Amerkiahaß, Amerikaliebe,” *Die Presse*, 29 October 2001, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/meinungarchiv/286696/Amerikahass-Amerikaliebe?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 05 May 2015).

⁷¹ “Antiamerikanismus,” *Die Presse*, 30 May 2007.

money from their pockets, he used to be a drunk, and the idiot now believes in all seriousness that God finds his policies superior.” The article called it “a criticism calculated by Austrians that Americans have not earned.” The article drew attention to the demons in Austria’s own elected government, namely Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel and his entry into the *Schwarz-Blaue* government despite having expressed different plans during the 1999 election campaign, and the EU sanctions that said coalition had earned for Austria.⁷²

As to Austrian criticism of alcoholism in Bush’s past, the November 2004 *Profil* article pointed to the problems many Austrian politicians were causing with their own avid drinking. In 2002, National Council member Anton Leikam was detained after drunkenly crashing his car into a guard rail and fleeing the scene. Within the same year, Freedom Party spokesman Reinhart Gaugg was nabbed from behind the wheel by police who awaited him on his way home from a tipsy appearance in public, and Klagenfurt City Council member Hermann Pansi’s refusal to take a field sobriety test escalated into a verbal clash with the officers who had accused him of being visibly intoxicated.⁷³ The following year, a number of women in Austrian parliament broke the silence about many of their colleagues’ frequent disruptive intoxication in parliamentary sessions, perplexed that it was sometimes “okay if members sat in parliament at an alcohol level far beyond the legal driving limit.”⁷⁴

⁷² Der Böse Amerikaner, *Profil*, 6 November 2004, <http://www.profil.at/home/der-amerikaner-97369> (accessed 05 April 2015).

⁷³ “Reinhart Gaugg,” *Der Standard*, 5 August 2002, <http://derstandard.at/1032166/Reinhart-Gaugg> (accessed 15 April 2015); “Klagenfurter SP-Mann laut Polizei Alkoholfahrer,” *News AT*, 15 October 2002, <http://www.news.at/a/klagenfurter-sp-mann-polizei-alkofahrer-43281> (accessed 15 April 2015); “Pfeiler: Rücktritt nach Alko-Unfall,” *ÖRF*, 29 March 2012, <http://kaernten.orf.at/news/stories/2526933/> (accessed 15 April 2015).

⁷⁴ “Politikerinnen für Alkoholverbot im Parlament,” *Der Standard*, 24 July 2003, <http://derstandard.at/1369817/Politikerinnen-fuer-Alkoholverbot-im-Parlament> (accessed 15 April 2015).

Further deconstructing the popular aversion to similarities between contemporary Austrian and American political leadership, the 2004 *Profil* article emphasized that Austrian leadership was entirely aware of the realities that the anti-American public chose to ignore. They were well aware that Kerry had supported the Iraq war. They knew that however incompetent Bush was, his administration as a whole seemed to be as intelligent as Clinton's before him. They knew that Vienna was just as prone to corruption as Washington, and that Bush projected a positive image in campaign debates, more so than most Austrian politicians did. Did Austrians' "arrogance and fear mongering" result from finding America too powerful, and Bush too self-assured?⁷⁵ Again, Austrians had a problem with American power in the world.

Throughout the Bush era, Austrians frequently drew parallels between America's current military campaign in Iraq, and America's military occupation of Austria during World War II. Hans Rauscher's column in *Der Standard* reacted to Bush's announcement of an "axis of evil." He criticized Austrians who called the American identification of evil as "simple." He wrote: "Incidentally, when Americans defeated the real evil, namely Hitler's regime, they also established newspapers [here] in order to bring democracy to Germans and Austrians. In many of those pages today, people sneer especially at their 'simplistic' world view."⁷⁶ In a press conference following the US-EU summit in 2006, Chancellor Schüssel chimed in after Bush responded to a question from an audience member who reminded Bush of his unpopularity throughout Europe for the military campaign in Iraq. Schüssel stood next to the president and stated that Europe would be

⁷⁵ "Böse Amerikaner," *Profil*.

⁷⁶ Hans Rauscher, "Kolumne: Das "Böse" mit Anführungszeichen" *Die Standard*, 21 February 2002 (accessed 02 May 2015).

nothing if it had not been for America's interventionist policies during World War II.⁷⁷ Here were official signals that denouncing the United States in Austria was no longer *de rigueur*.

Obama Campaign and Election

Anticipation of the 2008 presidential election was high in Austria, and anti-Americanism faded in the country as Bush's inevitable exit from the White House approached. The so-called "Obama Fever" that swept the United States also caught on in Austria and was a stark return of the glimpses of optimism vis-à-vis the United States that the Kerry campaign brought to the European country in 2004. Obama's image contrasted that of the tired conservative "cowboy president" in a way that promised to overhaul the American presidency and appease the vast majority of Austrian critics of the United States. The Bush era was on the way out, and a hard downswing of Austrian anti-Americanism was around the corner.

Obama's image as the young and attractive liberal African-American Senator from Illinois made him the exact answer to two terms of George W. Bush's presidency that Austrians wanted to see in the White House. His impeccable campaign speeches left audiences star struck in Austria as much as they did in the United States. As Günter Bischof said in an interview with *Voralberger Nachrichten*, Obama was "young charismatic politician who perfectly embodied a spirit of departure." Obama's few interactions with Austrians on the campaign trail gave citizens of the small country an image of the candidate that was more human than political. As opposed to the official

⁷⁷ "President Bush Participates in Press Availability at 2006 U.S.-EU Summit," 21 June 2006, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/06/20060621-6.html> (accessed 26 April 2015).

speeches, secret service road blocks, and press conferences of Bush's 2006 visit to Vienna, *Profil* quoted Obama in October 2007, saying that the reason he sometimes did not wear a tie was because he would drip soup on it and have to take it off.⁷⁸

Within the Austrian discussion of Obama's ethnicity was a fair amount of skepticism and cynicism. Norbert Rief's February 2007 article in *Die Presse* cited historical trends of black American political candidates being more popular in campaign polls than in the actual elections. Rief speculated said that Americans would likely feign support for a black presidential candidate for fear of otherwise appearing racist. Obama's white speech and mannerisms, as Rief argued, were what won him support from white voters as a black candidate. Upon Obama's November 2008 election, it was rare that Austrian elites criticized Americans for having elected a black president. Popular Austrian opinion was very distant from such criticisms. In the week following the election, a *Profil* article shamed former *ORF* correspondent in Washington Klaus Emmerich for having said that "Things must have been pretty bad for the Americans if they sent a black man to the White House."

The vast majority of Austrian media lauded Americans' election of the country's first African-American president as an accomplishment that Austria should strive towards. The November 8 2008 issue of *Profil* featured multiple articles that were focused on this theme. As seen in this issue, the "democratic revolution" that was Obama's election was a "quantum leap" in America's political development. The election revealed America's progress in race relations, from which Europe was "generations removed," and "once again: learning from America!" One of the articles asked Austrians,

⁷⁸ "Man muss jedem Menschen zuhören," *Profil*, 13 October 2007, <http://www.profil.at/home/man-menschen-186126> (accessed 04 April 2015).

“Where is our Obama?”⁷⁹ A *Die Presse* article from November 7, 2008 conveyed that while America was celebrating “Yes we can,” Austria was still in its “I have a dream” phase, quoting Iraqi-born Vienna City Council Member Omar Al-Rawi saying that Austria was in the early stages of its minority rights movement.⁸⁰ In the same issue of *Die Presse*, Christian Ultsch expressed his wonderment for the “permeability” of American society, pointing to the president-elect as the son of a Muslim and African-born immigrant, also using the example of Arnold Schwarzenegger as a child of Austria who emigrated to the United States, and rose to become a film sensation, and later governor of California.⁸¹

Austrians’ excitement over natives of their own country achieving the so-called “American dream” was present in their newly restored fanfare for the United States. Hans Rauscher’s article in *Der Standard* covering Obama’s inauguration illuminated a reference in the president’s speech to Fred Astaire’s 1936 musical number “Pick Yourself Up.” Rauscher quoted the president: “Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.” The article labeled the reference as having been analogous to America’s recovery from the Great Depression following the 1929 stock market crash.⁸² Yet it is noteworthy that Astaire is a popular historical figure in Austria, having been born in the United States to Austrian emigrants.

⁷⁹“Schwarzseher,” *Profil*, 8 November 2008, <http://www.profil.at/home/schwarzseher-224984> (accessed 29 April 2015); “Eine demokratische Revolution,” *Profil*, 08 November 2008, <http://www.profil.at/home/eine-revolution-224983> (accessed 29 April 2015).

⁸⁰ Jutta Sommerbauer, “‘Yes, we can in’ in Österreich? Eher schon: ‘I have a dream’,” *Die Presse*, 07 November 2008, http://diepresse.com/home/politik/uswahl/428755/Yes-we-can-in-Osterreich-Eher-schon_I-have-a-dream?from=suche.intern.portal (accessed 6 April 2015).

⁸¹ Christian Ultsch, “Wäre Obama in Österreich Denkbar?,” 7 November 2008, <http://diepresse.com/home/politik/uswahl/428668/Waere-Obama-in-Osterreich-denkbar?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 01 April 2015).

⁸² “Obama, Sinatra, Astaire,” *Der Standard*, 22 January 2009, <http://derstandard.at/1231152640695/Einserkastl-RAU-Obama-Sinatra-Astaire> (accessed 26 February 2015).

A common myth among Austrians is that Astaire himself was born in the Burgenland, and he is therefore often (mistakenly) celebrated as a Burgenländer who made it big in America.⁸³

Among the euphoria in Austria over Bush's exit was Austrians' excitement to return to positive relations with the United States. Immediately following Obama's election, Elisabeth Oberdorfer published an opinion piece in *Der Standard*, in which she expressed Austrians' relief to yet again travel to the United States and interact normally with Americans. Young travelers in particular, she wrote, had avoided spending time in the United States, but would be eager to return and enjoy immersion in American culture. She pled ignorance on behalf of Austrians by citing their main source on American affairs during the Bush years to have been Michael Moore's books and films. Furthermore, she remarked that Austrians had been too busy hating America for eight years to realize that Americans had meanwhile never stopped adoring Austria.⁸⁴

Upon Obama's January 2009 inauguration, Austrian conservatives voiced their skepticism of the president's ability to live up to his hype and face the real issues that awaited him in office, which his exciting election campaign had swept under a rug. In *Die Presse* on January 29, 2009, Christian Ortner questioned America's euphoric celebration for having elected their first black president, while on the brink of a major economic recession. Ortner's article criticized Obama's lack of a consistent plan in regards to America's economic crises, speculating that the president's attempts to rescue the banks and the economy would turn out to be temporary fixes at best. Ortner criticized

⁸³ "Nur ein Mythos: Fred Astaire ein Burgenländer," *Pannonien.TiVi*, 11 June 2009, <http://pannonien.tv/nur-ein-mythos-fred-astaire-ein-burgenlander/2009/> (accessed 06 June 2015).

⁸⁴ Elisabeth Oberdorfer, "Glosse: Are we cool now?" *Der Standard*, November 5 2008, <http://derstandard.at/1225359053720> (accessed 26 February 2015).

those who had overlooked these issues, under the spell of Obama's sharp looks, and brilliant but empty speeches.⁸⁵ Norbert Rief made similar comments some days earlier in *Die Presse*, chiding those who believed in Obama's supposed overnight rescue of America. Rief wrote sarcastically that on that day in Washington, Guantanamo had been closed, the economy saved, and the War in Iraq ended – all before lunch.⁸⁶

Conclusion

Austrians were again fickle in their attitude towards the United States with a swift change in their outlook on the country with Bush's exit from the White House and Barack Obama's entrance. The post-9/11 shift from sympathy towards the US to antagonism had also been a quick and drastic change in public opinion. The sweeping Obama fever and pro-Americanist upsurge that hit Austria in 2008/2009 demonstrated that the pattern of wild swings between pro- and anti-Americanism was consistent. Yet *Die Presse* got it right in May 2007 when it averred that anti-Americanism might be the lasting legacy of Bush's presidency.⁸⁷

Obama's presidency gradually lost its luster in terms of America's image abroad. The November 2010 Wikileaks affair, in which thousands of United States diplomatic communications were leaked online, brought an embarrassing level of transparency to the

⁸⁵ Christian Ortner, "Wie man glücklich pleitegeht," *Die Presse*, 23 January 2009, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/quergeschrieben/christianortner/446271/Wie-man-gluecklich-pleitegeht?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 03 March 2015).

⁸⁶ Norbert Rief, "Obamas Blitzstart mit Hinderhissen" *Die Presse*, 21 January 2009, <http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/445866/Obamas-Blitzstart-mit-Hindernissen?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 10 March 2014).

⁸⁷ "Antiamerikanismus – die größte Erblast des George W. Bush," *Die Presse*, 30 May 2007, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/gastkommentar/307134/Antiamerikanismus-die-grosste-Erblast-des-George-W-Bush?from=suche.intern.portal> (accessed 05 May 2015).

Obama administration. Edward Snowden's revelation of the United States' mass electronic surveillance and worldwide data mining drastically hurt America's image abroad and led to new upsurges of anti-Americanism. Clearly resentments of America still were not dissolved, but rather in remission until once again agitated by popular media.

Yet these swings in public opinion of the United States during Obama's presidency were nowhere near as drastic as during George W. Bush's presidency. Launching from a moment of solidarity with the United States following the 9/11 attacks, Austrians swung into an era of broadly based anti-Americanism across the country's political spectrum. Neoconservative assaults on Europe and Bush's attack on Iraq produced a big wave of European and Austrian anti-Americanism. The Abu Ghraib prison abuses confirmed the worst instincts of the European anti-Americans. As long as the "cowboy" Bush was in the White House, Western Europeans and Austrians would not be reconciled with America. While much of this anti-Americanism was frenzied, voices of reason were also present through the Bush years, questioning this trend of knee-jerk anti-Americanism. Barack Obama's election to the White House placed Austrian anti-Americanism in all political camps again beneath the shallow surface of public opinion, easily to be reawakened.

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